

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

22 STEM CELL LINES INSUFFICIENT

May 20, 2005

Dear Colleague:

As you know, in 2001, President Bush took a critical first step in helping to realize the promise of embryonic stem cell research by allowing federal funding on a limited number of stem cell lines. At that time, the Administration believed 78 lines would be available for federal funding. Today, only 22 lines are approved by the NIH and available for research, and the chair of the NIH Stem Cell Task Force, Dr. James Battey, has stated that only 23 lines will ever be available.

Research advancements in the four years since the policy was enacted have revealed significant limitations of the 22 eligible lines:

- The stem cell lines eligible for federal funding are unstable, difficult to grow, and contaminated by animal molecules.
- Since 2001, 128 embryonic stem cell lines have been developed that are ineligible for federally funded research.
- Since 2001, scientists have developed techniques for establishing embryonic stem cell lines free of animal molecules.
- The eligible stem cell lines lack the genetic diversity needed for the development of therapies that will benefit a widespread population.
- More than 22 embryonic stem cell lines will be needed to produce all cell types necessary for treatments.


Just last month, NIH Director Elias Zerhouni stated, "From a scientific standpoint, there is no doubt that many scientists will tell you that there are questions they would like to be able to address, that more lines...would be helpful to them. There are areas of research that you could pursue."

It is time the federal policy on embryonic stem cell research be expanded so that scientists can address questions, pursue areas of research, and explore the full potential this field of research holds. For more information on H.R. 810, the Stem Cell Research Enhancement Act of 2005, please contact Matt Meyer with Rep. Shays (5-5541) or Amy Pellegrino with Rep. Simmons (5-2076).

Sincerely,



Christopher Shays
Member of Congress



Rob Simmons
Member of Congress